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THE SATIRE OF JOHN MARSTON. By Morse S. Allen.
Princeton Ph.D. Dissertation. Columbus, Ohio. 1920.

Dr. Allen's dissertation is a careful summary and revaluation of all the problems which concern Marston as a satirist. It begins with the two quarrels with Hall and Jonson, passes on to an analysis of the verse satires, *Pygmalion's Image* and *Scourge of Villainy*, and concludes with a summary of the satiric elements in the plays. The principle of Dr. Allen's work is prudence; he has no radical theories to present, and gives short shrift to the guesses of previous scholars. The result is a study of Marston that is eminently safe.

In crossing swords with Hall, Dr. Allen believes that Marston was moved not by any contemptuous references to himself, but by Hall's strictures on contemporary poets. He does not think that Hall ever replied to Marston, or took any notice of him, except possibly in the epigram which Hall is credited with having had pasted in every copy of *Pygmalion* which came to Cambridge.

Accepting Jonson's statement to Drummond that his quarrel with Marston arose out of Marston's representing him on the stage, Dr. Allen finds that origin in the character of Chrisogonus in *Histriomastix*. This he feels convinced was a satire on Jonson, and he is equally sure of Lampatho in *What You Will*. His reasons in both cases have a good deal of force; not so strongly supported is his argument that in Brabant Senior, the unsympathetic railler of *Jack Drum*, Marston was again aiming at Jonson, not so much at his person as at his habits of mind. To quote Dr. Allen's own words: "What he did was to rebuke Jonson for a characteristic of his dramas, and incidentally satirize his arrogance, and his disdain for contemporary literature."¹ As to Jonson's representations of Marston, Dr. Allen will accept only Crispinus of the *Poetaster* as certain. Otherwise he detects only occasional fleers at Marston's style. Thus he will not agree that either Hedon or Anaides of *Cynthia's Revels* is a portrait of Marston. And he protests against the habit of reading personal satire into the plays involved, or supposed to be involved, in the controversy. His basic premise is that "it was only the exceptional Elizabethan play which contained any personal satire."² Accordingly it is in this light that he interprets Jonson, a man by the way who saw everything in a very personal light. "His Brisks and Hedons represent a general type much more than they do any particular individual."³ This is as near to a bias as Dr. Allen comes, and surely he could not have a safer bias.

¹ P. 37.

² P. 39.

³ P. 21.

His treatment of the stage quarrel, therefore, is much simpler than most others, as is gauged by the fact that he will admit of only seven plays as having been in any way concerned. These are *Histriomastix*, *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, *Cynthia's Revels*, *What You Will*, *Poetaster*, and *Satiromastix*.

Dr. Allen's treatment of the literary aspects of Marston's satire is in the nature of analysis rather than argument, and calls for little comment. He finds a dualism in Marston's personality comprised of a genuine distaste for corruption and desire to reform, on the one hand, and on the other a strong curiosity as to vice. "At the bottom Marston was indignant at the world, and contemptuous of it; he had something of 'what Swinburne apostrophized as his 'noble heart of hatred.' . . . Taking this wider outlook, I feel sure that Marston regarded himself as being like his own *Malcontent* or *Fawn*, in the world but not of it."⁴ At the same time, "when lust is so carefully and lingeringly dwelt upon, it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that its consideration was pleasing to the author."⁵ Dr. Allen finds a parallel in Dean Swift, who in other respects seems to him to echo Marston's personality, especially in the intellectual, non-emotional character of his filth.

The satire of Marston disintegrates, we are told, in the later plays. At first, "Marston had possessed the younger, more hopeful mood where satire is administered to reform vice. Now it sours into something very close to hatred for the world as a whole. He certainly despises man."⁶ This disintegration, begun in *What You Will*, culminates in the *Fawn*, where the satire is base and nauseous. The *Fawn* also represents the breaking up of the *Malcontent* type, with which Marston himself was becoming disgusted. The last plays, *Sophonisba* and the *Insatiate Countess*, are crude attempts to recapture the doubtful glories of the *Antonio* plays. Dr. Allen concludes his survey by wondering whether Marston would not have been happier in the age of the novel; "had his gifts for satire, depiction of real life, and vivid characterization, been employed in the looser form of the novel, it is possible that his name would bulk much larger than it does in literary history."⁷ To which one might reply that inasmuch as Marston's genius was of the stage stagey, it is doubtful if it would have thriven better elsewhere.

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⁴ P. 119.

⁵ P. 97.

⁶ P. 159.

⁷ P. 161.